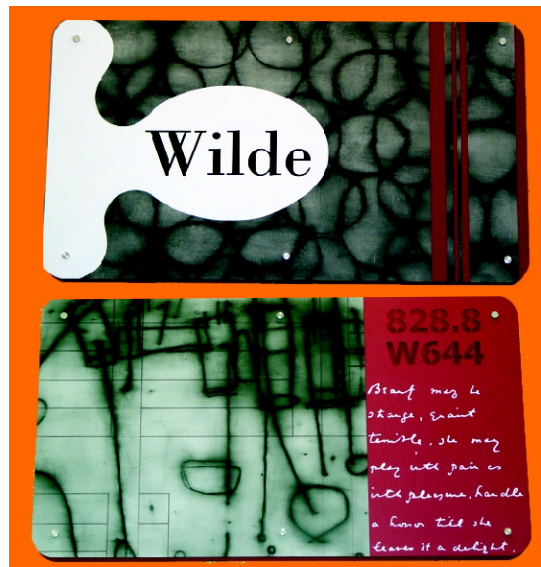


Suspended Gallery

Erik Gonzales
October 2004

The artwork in the central nave of the Red Mountain Library consists of six double-sided art panels that are suspended by aircraft cable and stainless steel anchors. The panels are made of Lexan, a near indestructible type of Plexiglas and were hand-painted by the artist. The panels draw inspiration from Red Mountain, the local plant and animal life and information found within the collections at the library. The art utilizes a combination of silhouettes of Red Mountain, topography of Red Mountain, DNA forms from plant and animal life, including the artist, quotes from various forms of books within the library and actually numbers found in the Dewey decimal system. *Suspended Gallery* was commissioned by the City of Mesa Public Art Program, and was dedicated November 9, 2004.

Erik Gonzales is a local artist whose works have been exhibited at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, the Dolby Chadwick Gallery in San Francisco and the Momus Gallery in Atlanta. Mr. Gonzales has also been the recipient of the Visual Arts Fellowship from the Arizona Commission on the Arts and the Regents Fine Art Scholarship from Arizona State University.



"The Remarkable Rocket." If you look closely at the overlapping images you will find several forms in the shape of a firework rocket traveling upwards into the sky. Next to this image I chose to include an enlarged sample of Wilde's actual handwriting. His unique penmanship gives us a brief glimpse of his view of beauty. It may take some time by his handwriting can be deciphered. The second painting pays tribute to the Edwardian period in which the author lived. The series of painted ovals overlap to create a more ornate and complex pattern. The idea was to show how complexity and sophistication can come from humble beginnings.

Gregor Mendel (DNA). (Paintings hanging in the middle of the long central nave.) The two paintings incorporate the themes of genetics and science in order to reference the importance of all sciences and their role as an important part of any library's collection. I have been using imagery based on genetic studies for many years within my work to illustrate the concept of genetic coding and consumer coding, thus the inclusion of the barcodes. The use of the Punnett square in one of the paintings pays homage to the scientific process, while the soft, velvety black DNA "gels" take on an almost figurative form at times and gently cascade downward off the picture plane. The figurative feel of the forms happens to hint at their origins and happen to be close ups of my own DNA. Before starting the paintings, I had my own DNA profile completed by a genetics laboratory and then proceeded in using this test imagery as inspiration. The paintings could be seen as a self-portrait of the artist. Throughout my career, have been inspired by naturally occurring beauty in the world. The use of DNA test "gels" is one such example.



Oscar Wilde.

(First paintings to the right of the central information desk.) Oscar Wilde was a man of many talents, all of which can be found in various areas of the library. He wrote plays and prose, was an accomplished poet and left us with some everlasting critiques of modern life. I wanted to demonstrate the virtuoso of Wilde by contrasting two seemingly unrelated subjects within the same picture plane. In the first painting with the cutouts I created a linear composition inspired by Wilde's short story

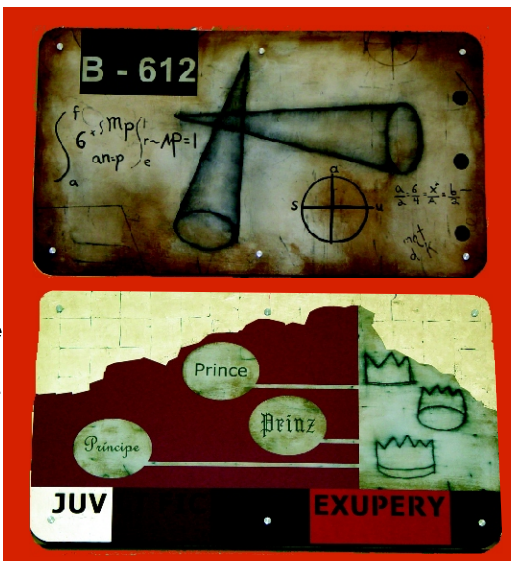


The Tempest. (Paintings at the far end of the long central nave.)

For the subject matter of these two paintings, I wanted to reference the "classics" that are a major part of any library collection. I chose William Shakespeare and his masterpiece "The Tempest" as a starting point. Each painting shows an interpretation of the play acted out within each composition. On one side there is a turbulent looking background with a bold nautical flag symbolizing "storm warning," while the other painting shows a portion of the cast characters layered over passionate red abstract forms. These forms, as with the dark ship-like shapes within the first painting, are again taken from natural biology. "The Tempest" is a very dramatic work and centers around the character Prospero, whose name is seen in one painting. I intentionally chose a work of Shakespeare's that does not have the same notoriety as one of his perennial favorites like "Romeo and Juliet." It is my hope that the paintings will inspire the viewer to explore other lesser-known writings by Shakespeare and others rather than focus on consistent favorites.

The Little Prince. (Paintings displayed outside of children's literature.) These paintings are

inspired by the timeless children's classic "The Little Prince", by Antoine Saint Exupery. The painting with the call number for the book cut outs shows the silhouette of Red Mountain in gold leaf with the word "prince" spelled in three different languages. By having "prince" in English/French, German and Spanish, I wanted to show the worldwide popularity of the story and how it transcends race and culture. The second painting with its Old-World patina and blackboard-like scribbles shows my interpretation of a small illustration within the book. The painting is an extreme close-up of a drawing/diagram within one of the author's illustrations. The large number in the corner references one of the asteroids the little prince visits in the story. I wanted to show the timelessness of the story through the weathered patina on the painting and show a little of the magic hidden within the book's pages.



Federico Garcia Lorca.

(Paintings with the words "green" by the double doors.)

The paintings are an homage to the Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca's work. He has been my favorite poet for many years and has inspired many paintings. The two paintings reference Lorca's "Somnambule Ballad." The text within the paintings are English interpretations of the original Spanish verse. The compositions utilize various aspects of Red Mountain Library's location for imagery. The large branch of an indigenous mesquite tree floats above the red topography of Red Mountain itself. The use of natural shapes and colors brings nature together with Lorca's words within each painting. It was my intention to show a different perspective of poetry and hopefully engage the view to find personal meaning in each piece. If the viewer wanted to continue their experience they could perhaps find some of Lorca's writing within the library system by utilizing the call numbers cut out of the painting.



Picasso. (Paintings hanging) Perpendicular to the other in its own space. By choosing Pablo Picasso as the inspiration for these paintings I wanted to show the resources of art and art history within the library. Picasso was one of my earliest heroes and has always remained a great source of inspiration for his determination and for all that he has accomplished. His legacy will remain imprinted on the face of art history for all eternity. With the first painting I wanted to show Picasso through my eyes. The large, black oval shapes interconnect to form an abstracted minotaur, one of Picasso's favorite mythological characters. The serpentine circles in the background reference a labyrinth in which the minotaur lives. The bands of color show hints of the natural palette found in East Mesa. The corresponding paintings acts more as a key to the first, showing the head of the infamous minotaur along with Picasso's famous words. The image give the viewer a clue as to what is on the other side while the quote demonstrates Picasso's almost childlike view of the world.

